



Rising stalking cases – Where is the problem?

Description

Background :-

- Incidents of stalking, especially among women are being reported in big numbers. 2014 was reported with 4699 cases of stalking. They rose to 7,132 in 2016 as per the data available with the Union home ministry of India.
- Section 354D (stalking) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), came into force after Parliament made amendments in the IPC section and made it a serious crime in 2013.

Reasons for increasing stalking cases :-

- The number of filed cases is increasing. But the conviction rate is extremely low. Of the 4,699 cases registered in 2014, only 134 cases resulted in conviction of 262 people. In 2015, 6266 cases were filed out of which 340 cases saw conviction of 473 accused. The conviction rate of last year was 5% with 7132 cases being filed.
- The police too takes a considerate amount of time to file a charge sheet for the offence. Within this tenure, some complainants are pressurized to withdraw their cases. This encourages the criminals all the more as they can flee away without any punishment.
- Our education system do not focus on teaching moral values, which is the most essential thing to pass on to next generations. Lack of moral values and ineffective gender sensitization programs are a major cause to these stalking cases.
- Cyber stalking is now a trend. Stalkers choose social media, mobile phones, computers and surveillance devices for their activities. Hence, with development, new methods of criminal activities are developing day by day.
- Cyber crimes also have the advantage of anonymity of the internet. This provides protection from authorities and easy access to victims. A new survey by the Domestic Violence Resource Centre of Victoria (DVRCV) found criminals using GPS tracking tools, Facebook etc. to stalk and abuse women.
- In a few cases, the victim's family is not willing to go for a legal action. They ask the police to threaten the stalker and leave. This does not help sometimes. The stalker keeps

repeating his/her actions resulting in the increase in crime rates.

- Stalking in India is a bailable offence when reported for the first time. This allows a few criminals to flee away without understanding the depth of the offence. Hence, the stalker is free to commit more serious crimes later on.

Solutions to decrease stalking cases :-

- A balance in conviction rate is urgent. Time-bound trial can help in more convictions.
- Police needs to be quicker and on time in their actions. The government also needs to implement stricter laws, not only on stalking but also on crimes against women as a whole.
- The media and other forms must educate and inform the public. They should be updated about the new laws and measures implemented by the government. This is for their own safety and betterment.
- Stalkers should be given effective punishments and they should be taught values and morals to avoid the repetition of crime.

Conclusion :-

Lack of moral education in schools and colleges and lack of effective punishments need to be addressed immediately. The government along with media, political parties and the public can together reduce the crimes against women taking place.

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